

## COVID-19 Flash Update: Government Guidance Affecting Migrant Workers and their Employers in Thailand and Neighbouring Countries

The COVID-19 situation is evolving rapidly. In this update, the International Organization for Migration (IOM) provides information for migrant workers and their employers on government decisions relevant to migrant workers in Thailand, Cambodia, the Lao People's Democratic Republic and Myanmar.

Important Note: Please note that this is only a summary of the information provided by the above governments. Every effort is made to ensure information is up to date, however, as the situation is changing quickly you are encouraged to seek further information by contacting the Ministry of Labour or respective embassies directly.

### Updates and Information from IOM

IOM has updated its video on COVID-19 Prevention for Migrant Workers in Thailand:

- Khmer version: <https://youtu.be/MmkhFryqqU0>
- Lao version: [https://youtu.be/32OB\\_HlswUw](https://youtu.be/32OB_HlswUw)
- Myanmar version: <https://youtu.be/rpfzxr6qHc>

IOM and the International Chamber of Commerce (ICC) launched [Guidance on Protection for Migrant Workers during the COVID-19 Pandemic](#). This guidance has been adapted from IOM's [COVID-19 guidance for employers and business to enhance migrant worker protection during the current health crisis](#).

IOM Thailand is monitoring border movements and providing assistance to migrants and the Royal Thai Government. For updates and to access IOM tools and guidelines related to COVID-19, please check here: <https://thailand.iom.int/iom-thailand-covid-19-response>

### Thailand

**NEW: Extension of work permits for four groups of migrant workers in Thailand**

Reference: Thailand Department of Employment [official website](#), 5 August 2020

On 5 August, the Department of Employment (DOE) further extended eligibility to work and stay in Thailand for four groups of migrant workers, under specific conditions. Eligible migrants must register for their work permit extension between 17 August and 31 October 2020.

The following four groups of migrant workers are eligible to register to extend their work permits for a maximum period through to 31 March 2022.

- **Group 1 - eligible workers who have completed 4 years of employment:** MOU workers who have completed 4-years of employment can renew their work permit for a maximum of two years. Group 1's Non-LA visa can also be extended for one year, with further extensions permitted as long as work permit remains valid.
- **Group 2 - eligible workers who have changed or are changing employers:** MOU workers whose work and stay permits are invalid due to a change in employers can renew their work and stay

permits through the same process as Group 1, with support from the new employer.

Note: This is an exemption to Thai law which normally requires MOU workers to complete the process of changing employers within a 30-day period of finishing work with their previous employer.

- **Group 3 - eligible pink card holders:** pink card holders (those who have completed the Nationality Verification process) who had not yet registered on Name Lists before [the 31 March 2020 deadline](#) can continue to complete the process to extend their work permit.
- **Group 4 - eligible cross-border seasonal workers:** cross-border seasonal workers with an expired Border Pass who are stranded in Thailand due to the COVID-19 pandemic can renew their border passes. Each renewal is valid for 90 days through to 31 March 2022 maximum.

*The permit extension process for Group 1 (eligible workers who have completed 4 years of employment), Group 2 (eligible workers who have changed or are changing employers) and Group 3 (eligible pink card holders) is:*

- a) Obtain medical clearance at a designated Thai hospital to confirm that the worker is free from leprosy, elephantiasis, syphilis, drug addiction, alcoholism and psychosis;
- b) Purchase two-years Migrant Health Insurance Scheme (MHIS), which can be purchased at designated hospitals if the worker is not eligible for the Social Security Fund (SSF); or three-months MHIS, which can be purchased at designated hospitals if the worker is eligible for the SSF;
  - o Note: At the time of writing, domestic work, sea fishery, and seasonal work in

the agricultural and forestry sectors are not covered by Thailand's SSF. Workers in these sectors must purchase the MHIS.

- c) Obtain Non-LA visa at provincial/Bangkok-based Immigration Bureau offices;
- d) Obtain E-Work Permit card at DOE office in respective provinces/Bangkok.

Note: At the time of writing, a two-year work permit costs THB 1,900 and a one-year Non-LA visa costs THB 1,900.

*The permit extension process for Group 4 (eligible cross-border seasonal workers) is:*

- a) Obtain medical clearance at a designated Thai hospital to confirm that the worker is free from leprosy, elephantiasis, syphilis, drug addiction, alcoholism and psychosis;
- b) Purchase two-years Migrant Health Insurance Scheme (MHIS), which can be purchased at designated hospitals if the worker is not eligible for the Social Security Fund (SSF); or three-months MHIS, which can be purchased at designated hospitals if the worker is eligible for the SSF;
  - a. Note: At the time of writing, domestic work, sea fishery, and seasonal work in the agricultural and forestry sectors are not covered by Thailand's SSF. Workers in these sectors must purchase the MHIS.
- c) Submit the medical clearance and insurance at the DOE office in respective provinces/Bangkok, to obtain a renewed Border Pass.

Note: At the time of writing, the fee for renewing a Border Pass is THB 1,325.

#### **NEW: Extension of stay for migrants' dependents**

Reference: Royal Thai Government [official website](#), 4 August 2020

If pink card holders are on registered Name Lists, their dependents who are under 18 years of age can extend

their stay permits. This will allow the dependents to stay in Thailand for as long as their stay permit, and the stay and work permit of the person to whom they are a registered dependent, is valid. The dependents' visa will be automatically cancelled in cases when: 1) the stay and work permit of the person to whom they are a registered dependent expires; and/or 2) the dependent reaches 18 years of age. Dependents of pink card holders can register between 17 August and 31 October 2020 by:

- a) Obtaining medical clearance at state-designated Thai hospitals to confirm that the individual is free from leprosy, elephantiasis, syphilis, drug addiction, alcoholism and psychosis;
- b) Purchase two-years Migrant Health Insurance Scheme (MHIS) at designated Thai hospitals. Note: Dependents of Pink Card holders are not eligible to enroll in the SSF;
- c) Obtain Non-O category visa at provincial/Bangkok-based Immigration Bureau offices;
- d) Obtain Dependent Card from provincial/Bangkok-based municipality offices.

### No further announcements on procedures for migrant workers to enter Thailand

[IOM Flash Update #16](#) outlined the Centre for Covid-19 Situation Administration (CCSA)'s announcement of plans to permit six new groups to enter Thailand, including migrant workers. A further announcement on applicable procedures for migrant workers to enter Thailand was expected to be issued by the Ministry of Labour on 2 August 2020. At the time of publishing this Flash Update #17, no further announcements had been issued.

## Myanmar

### Update on safe return arrangements for Myanmar migrants in Thailand

Reference: General Administrative Department, Myawaddy

From 19 May through to 9 August 2020, 100,471 Myanmar nationals had been safely repatriated from Thailand through safe return arrangements. On a daily basis, the Myanmar Labour Attaché Office posts names of Myanmar nationals who are awaiting repatriation, and whose travel arrangements have been confirmed, on the Office's [Facebook page](#). For more details on these arrangements, see page 2 in [IOM's Flash Update #10](#).



IOM Myanmar Migrant Resource Center (MRC) Counselor conducting an interview with a migrant family in a distressed situation, to identify their humanitarian assistance needs, Shwe Myawaddy quarantine centre, Myawaddy, 8 August 2020

## Cambodia

### Official plans to reopen land borders between Thailand and Cambodia not yet in place

Reference: The Labour Attaché of the Royal Embassy of Cambodia in Thailand [official Facebook page](#), 1 August 2020

On 1 August 2020, the Labor Attaché from the Royal Embassy of Cambodia in Thailand announced that “[t]here has not been any official information yet regarding the reopening of land borders between Thailand and Cambodia.” The Labour Attaché is aware of rumors regarding the border between the two countries reopening, and is urging migrant workers to wait for an official announcement before taking any action on crossing the border into Thailand.



IOM Cambodia and Provincial Health Centre Staff delivering hygiene kits to newly arrived returnees at a community quarantine centre, Prey Veng province, 6 August 2020

### Cambodian workers in Thailand can contact Embassy for support

Reference: The Royal Embassy of Cambodia in Thailand, No. 559/20/SKB4, 7 August 2020

Following the announcement that four categories of migrant workers in Thailand are eligible to extend their work permits, the Royal Embassy of Cambodia in Thailand issued a letter instructing Cambodian migrant workers in Thailand to comply with the procedures summarized on page 1 of this Flash Update. Cambodian nationals encountering any issues or seeking further information can contact the Embassy via the [official Facebook page](#), or the Labor Attaché via phone: +66 (0) 94 092 5905.



IOM Cambodia, together with Provincial Health Department staff, handing over two mobile hand washing facilities to a Government-run quarantine centre in Kampong Thom province, 7 August 2020

## Lao People's Democratic Republic

### Further easing of restrictions from 1 to 31 August 2020

Reference: The Prime Minister's Office, N.806/PMO, 29 July 2020

The Prime Minister has further eased restrictions during the period from 1 to 31 August 2020. Details are listed on the [Lao COVID-19 Taskforce Official Website](#). All permitted activities are subject to compliance with physical distancing and COVID-19 prevention measures. Several restrictions remain in place:

- Entertainment venues, such as karaoke clubs and game centres, remain closed.

- Local<sup>1</sup>, traditional<sup>2</sup>, and international Points of Entry (POEs) remain closed.
- The issuance of entry visas remains suspended for citizens of countries affected by COVID-19.
- International charter flights are suspended.

Any new travel restrictions will be agreed between the Lao National Taskforce Committee for Prevention and Control of COVID-19 and the Department of Civil Aviation under the Ministry of Public Works and Transport, before submission to the Prime Minister's Office for approval.

### Additional guidance on prevention of potential second wave of the COVID-19 pandemic

Reference: The Prime Minister's Office, N.838/PMO, 7 August 2020

The Prime Minister ordered the public to fully comply with existing COVID-19 prevention measures (as stated in the above announcement N.806/PMO), to prevent a potential second wave of the COVID-19 pandemic. Details are listed on the [Lao COVID-19 Taskforce Official Website](#), with key points including:

- The Ministry of Public Security (MOPS) will work with the COVID-19 Taskforce in each province to strengthen border management. Migrants who are identified as irregular must be tested for

COVID-19 and undergo 14-days quarantine in a Government quarantine facility, subject to compliance with physical distancing and other COVID-19 prevention measures.

- MOPS must announce irregular migration trends to the public through channels such as news stations, television and/or [Lao Public Security Television](#), to raise public awareness on the risks of irregular migration.



IOM Lao People's Democratic Republic meeting with the Lao Women's Union to hand over direct assistance packs and Information, Education and Communications (IEC) materials to support 40 Lao victims of forced labour, 11 August 2020

*This COVID-19 Flash Update: Government Guidance Affecting Migrant Workers and their Employers in Thailand and Neighbouring Countries, has been produced by IOM Thailand. For more information, please contact [ThailandLHD@iom.int](mailto:ThailandLHD@iom.int)*

*Important disclaimer: The information presented in this document does not necessarily reflect the views of IOM. The inclusion or presentation of material does not imply the expression of any opinion whatsoever on the part of IOM or of any of its members or partners.*

<sup>1</sup> Local POE is for Lao nationals crossing the border using day passes.

<sup>2</sup> Traditional POE is for residents of the area surrounding the border crossing. Residents do not have to present any paperwork to cross the border using traditional POE.